

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

aTX341
.F615
Cop. 2

PERIOD. READ. RM

Food and Nutrition

February 1976 • Volume 6 • Number 1



New Legislation for Child Nutrition Programs

By Dianne D. Jenkins



Meet John-Michael. He's 4. It's a little hard to see him right now. Winter has him hidden in his hooded red snowsuit. John-Michael's Mom works all day while he stays with "the lady down the street" with five or six other kids. There's food for lunch, but sometimes there's not enough.

Beth has lived in her home since she was 5. She spends most of her day there and she's learned a lot of things, although learning is more difficult for Beth than for most children. Beth lives in a State-supported home for mentally retarded children. Money is tight, and meals aren't always what they should be.

On October 7, Congress passed new child nutrition legislation that will help get food assistance to children like John-Michael and Beth as well as to many others in very different situations.

Specifically, the new law—P.L. 94-105—makes major changes in the Department of Agriculture's school food programs, day care food program, summer food program and special food program for women, infants and children.

SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS

There are four major changes in the school food programs as a result of the new law, according to Gene Dickey, manager of the school nutrition programs branch for the Food and Nutrition Service. One "redefines schools" and in effect, extends the lunch program beyond schools to places like orphanages, and homes for the mentally retarded. The second makes the breakfast program available to any school that needs it. The third addresses the problem of food waste in high schools and the fourth makes reduced-price meals available to more children.

Lunch Program Extended

Bakersville Detention Center. Athens Home for Orphans. Stillwell Home for the Mentally Retarded. What do all these places have in common? They can now all join the National School Lunch Program.

With funds and food, the National School Lunch Program helped provide meals for over 25 million children in schools last year. Now, this program is available to children living in institutions.

P.L. 94-105 extends the school lunch program beyond schools by "redefining schools" to include institutions where children live. Mr. Dickey calls this "one of the most far-reaching changes made in the program." By the end of the year, Mr. Dickey expects 400,000 children living in institutions to be eating meals provided through the National School Lunch Program.

"In order to join the program, institutions no longer have to have an education program," said Mr. Dickey, "but they must be structured to serve children." Private, as well as public, institutions can be in the program if they are licensed and non-profit.

Just as with schools in the program, the amount of money the institutions receive for their lunch programs is based on the number of needy children they serve.

Breakfast

Many nutritionists consider breakfast the most important meal of the day. However, studies show most students come to school with little or no breakfast. But now, Congress has provided permanent authorization for the National School Breakfast Program and any school that needs to provide breakfast can join.

Before the new law, the breakfast program was a pilot project available in only about 16 percent of the 88,000 schools participating in the National School Lunch Program. About 2 million students are taking advantage of the program now, but Mr. Dickey hopes the expanded breakfast program will reach another half million youngsters before the end of the school year.

The program provides a balanced morning meal of milk, fruit or fruit juice, and bread or cereal, and is available for needy students free or at a reduced price of no more than 20 cents.

Mr. Dickey expects growth in the breakfast program over the next few years, but he sees this growth stymied by social and economic pressures. "Many people feel breakfast is one of the last bastions of the fam-



ily unit. They see school breakfast as an intrusion into the family's domain—and I expect this attitude to limit the growth of the program.

"Breakfast also poses some new problems for cafeteria managers and we're working on these now," Mr. Dickey said. "School districts have an additional workload to contend with as well as increased hours for cafeteria employees. Scheduling and supervising children during the breakfast period 30 minutes to an hour before school actually starts is another problem area for the schools," he added.

As required by the new law, States and the Federal government are now conducting information campaigns to make people aware of the availability of the breakfast program and its benefits.

Offer vs. Serve— The Food Waste Solution

When is a student too old to be told what he has to eat for lunch? Congress considered this question in drafting the new legislation. The result—senior high school students now have the right to decide what they want for lunch and can't be re-

quired to take food they don't intend to eat.

For cafeteria managers, this means they must only offer instead of serve the Type A lunch prescribed by the National School Lunch Program.

This change is aimed at the problem of food waste in high school lunch programs. Not all high school students want to eat the 2 ounces of meat, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup fruit and/or vegetables, slice of bread, 2 tablespoons of butter and 8 ounces of fluid milk the Type A lunch provides. The result has been a lot of wasted food. "While Congress wants to meet national nutrition objectives," Mr. Dickey said, "it is also very sensitive to the national and world concern with the issue of food waste.

"With this change," Mr. Dickey continued, "I think we are finally acknowledging that high school students are adults. By the time our students reach high school, their food patterns are basically set. The responsibility for teaching the value of good nutrition must fall heaviest on educators and cafeteria managers dealing with children in their formative years.

"At the high school level," Mr. Dickey added, "our responsibility is to offer a variety of well-prepared, nutritious food. If the education process has taken hold and if a variety of good food is available, I expect our students will choose a lunch consistent with good nutrition. I realize this is an ideal situation. But, even when that situation doesn't exist, I see little advantage in requiring students to take food and waste it."

The new legislation still requires students to pay the full price for the Type A meal whether or not they take all the components. Essentially, said Mr. Dickey, this was done to prevent the government-supported

lunch program from turning into a government-supported snack program.

Schools will still be reimbursed for the complete Type A lunch, even if a student only takes part of it. Just as now, however, the reimbursements will be periodically adjusted to reflect the actual cost of producing the student's meal.

Free and Reduced Price Meals

At the beginning of this year only 20 percent of schools participating in the National School Lunch Program offered reduced-price lunches to needy children. Now all participating schools offer them.

The new law requires all schools to serve reduced-price meals and also increases the number of students eligible for the program.

The new legislation sets income eligibility at 95 percent above the income poverty guidelines recommended by the Secretary of Agriculture. This means children from a family of four with an income of



\$9,770 are now eligible for reduced price benefits. Previously, eligibility was held to a maximum of 75 percent above the guidelines, which is \$8,770 for a family of four.

As a result of these legislative changes in the program, Mr. Dickey expects to see about 2 million more students taking advantage of the lunch program by the end of the school year.

Eligibility for free meals remains the same. Using the Secretary's guidelines, States have the option of increasing the maximum level of eligibility by as much as 25 percent. For instance, the guidelines set \$5,010 as the level of eligibility for a family of four. States may increase that figure by as much as 25 percent—to \$6,260 for a family of four.

Local school officials are allowed to double-check information on free and reduced price applications if they have reason to believe it is false or incomplete.

A child whose parent or guardian is unemployed is eligible for free or reduced-price lunches if the family's income falls within the poverty guidelines.

CHILD CARE FOOD PROGRAM

"The day care program is no longer just for especially needy children," according to Margaret Glavin, program manager. All public and private day care centers, if they are nonprofit, can now join. This includes family day care homes, Head Start Centers, settlement houses and recreation centers.

Understandably, Ms. Glavin expects the number of children in the program to grow by as much as 50 percent in the coming year. Currently, about 450,000 children are in the day care program.

The Child Care Food Program supports day care centers with money and food for breakfasts, lunches, suppers and snacks. Before the new law, the program was available only through day care centers in poverty areas or in areas with a great many working mothers.

To join the program, day care centers must have (or be moving toward) a tax exempt status or participate in another Federal program requiring tax exempt status. They must also be licensed and meet Federal inter-agency day care requirements established in 1968 by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the Department of Labor and the Office of Economic Opportunity.

Just as with schools in the National School Lunch Program, the amount of money the day care centers receive is based on the number of needy children they serve.

"One of our biggest problems in administering this expanded program," according to Ms. Glavin, "concerns family day care homes, where as few as three to five children may be involved. To help solve this problem, participating family day care homes have sponsoring organizations which develop management

plans, providing assistance to homes and handling reimbursements."

At the State level, the Child Care Food Program is administered by State education agencies or an alternate agency designated by the State, or the regional office of the Food and Nutrition Service.

The Child Care Food Program is authorized by the new law to operate until September 30, 1978.

SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM

The Summer Food Program feeds needy children during summer months and vacations when schools are closed and lunch programs are not operating. Two million needy children received meals through the summer program last year, and that number may increase by as much as 60 percent during the coming year as a result of the new public law.

The program is now available to residential summer camps; it was limited to nonresidential public and private (nonprofit) institutions, such as city recreation programs.

Summer camps and nonresidential institutions qualify to sponsor the federally subsidized food program if one-third of the children they serve are from needy families. Under the old law, institutions qualified only if half the children were needy.



In addition, sponsors are now able to serve breakfasts, lunches, suppers and snacks as long as the meals don't overlap. Last year, the number of meals sponsors could serve depended on the length of time children were at the meal site.

Under the new legislation, the program is available from May to September and is authorized to operate until September 30, 1977.

Funding under the revised program will be based on performance—how many children were fed and at what cost to the sponsor—as opposed to an apportionment formula as in the past. Also, all meals will now be served free, and sponsoring organizations will no longer be required to tally paid and reduced-price meals. Maximum rates of reimbursement are established at 81.5 cents for lunches and suppers; 45.5 for breakfasts; and 21.25 for snacks. In March, these rates will be adjusted according to the changes in the Consumer Price Index. Sponsoring organizations will submit claims at least monthly.

To help sponsors get ready for their summer and vacation feeding programs, "start-up" funds are available at the discretion of the States for initial planning and training efforts. While start-up funds are optional, however, States are required to provide sponsors with advance funding for actual program expenses.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

USDA is required to study proposed cost accounting requirements and report back to Congress with recommendations for legislation by October 7, 1976. Under this provision, schools cannot be penalized if they do not begin cost accounting procedures within the coming year. Program manager Gene Dickey, however, encourages schools to use this as a "start-up" year and to go ahead with cost accounting if possible.

The new law requires USDA to conduct a study to determine the level of funding needed by States for administration of child nutrition programs. This report is to include a study of plate waste and be submitted to Congress by March 1, 1976.

PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN

The Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) attempts to improve the nutritional status of a specific group of people—pregnant women, infants and children up to age 5.

Under the new law, WIC is extended through September 1978 at a level of \$250 million annually. There are also a number of changes which improve the program for both the administering agencies and recipients.

Eligibility for the program now includes women from the time of pregnancy through 6 months postpartum and children until their fifth birthday. Before the new law, women could be in the program only up until 6 weeks postpartum, or 1 year if they were breastfeeding, and children until age 4.

As of December, there was an approved caseload of 750,000 recipients, but only about 500,000 were actually in the program. The new law increases the allowable administrative expenses from 10 to 20 percent, giving States the administrative capability to serve the approved caseload of 750,000.

The new law also requires that two groups of experts be organized to study the operation of the WIC program. The first of these is an advisory committee established for the single purpose of determining and recommending to the Secretary of Agriculture and Congress the best method of evaluating and assessing health benefits of the program.

The second group is the ongoing Advisory Council on Maternal Infant and Fetal Nutrition established to report annually to the President and Congress on any recommended administrative or legislative changes. ☆

HOW TWO LUNCH PROGRAMS SAVE MONEY

By Ronald J. Rhodes and Carol M. D'Arrezo

1.

To some 30,000 Tulsa youngsters, the school lunches they eat daily may seem to be the direct result of food service workers in the kitchen. But they are part of an effort that extends far beyond the cafeterias.

These meals are the product of an elaborate purchasing, storage and delivery system designed to provide this northeastern Oklahoma city's school lunch managers with quality foods at the lowest possible cost.

"Money the taxpayers of Tulsa were willing to spend years ago in setting up good warehousing and delivery systems has paid off in this time of inflation and higher food prices," says Malcolm Craig, purchasing director for the district.

The delivery system includes four trucks which deliver food Monday through Thursday from the school district's central warehouse to more than 100 schools. Food worth about \$40,000 is delivered each day—some of this food has been stored in the warehouse for several months.

The warehouse contains 29,000 square feet and includes three large walk-in coolers and three freezers, each 40 feet long, 27 feet wide and 17 feet high. This facility allows the school system to buy and store food supplies in carload lots, at a relatively low cost through volume and direct purchase.

Nearly all the food used in the Tulsa school cafeterias is bought on a bid basis. Notices of the item needed are sent to a list of brokers who submit a price. Samples are requested, if the product is new.

The district's food service office furnishes the purchasing department

written specifications for all food items. In addition, new products are analyzed by district food service director Mary Harris and some of her dietitians. Brand names are removed, before analysis, according to Ms. Harris, and each sample is tested for quality. Results of these tests are considered in awarding contracts.

"The lowest bid is not accepted if the product does not meet specifications of our staff," she points out.

To maintain this high standard and still keep costs down, John Holderman, purchasing agent for the district, watches the commodity markets closely, including futures, to determine the best time to buy foods.

Printouts also help in food delivery to schools. Each school lunch manager sends an order to the district food service department weekly. The list is checked and then sent to the computer. The warehouse gets a computer list showing the total amount of food ordered and a list showing the amount needed at each school. The food is then loaded into the trucks according to school and delivery schedule. Every school gets a delivery at least once a week, some more often, depending on storage space.

How effective has the food purchasing and storage system been?

"It's saved us a lot of money," says Mr. Holderman. "For example, the cost of sugar for our schools never went above \$38 a hundred weight this year. We bought before the price rise started and had enough to last until the situation eased."

"When we think supplies of a product may be short and prices may rise, we often buy a year's supply or more," he says.

"We never know how many bids we will get," he points out. "On some vegetables we may get 15 or 20 bids. On foods that are scarce, we could get just one or two."

Because the district can hold food in the warehouse for several months, the purchasing department is also able to take advantage of special prices. If a special price appears on an item not normally used by food service, Mr. Holderman checks with Ms. Harris to see if it might be used effectively in school lunches.

To ensure the availability of supplies to schools in the district, a computer helps keep track of the amount of food on hand at all times and how much it is worth. An updated inventory printout goes to the purchasing department each week. By checking the amount on hand and the minimum needed, department personnel can tell when to reorder an item.

In fact the storage facility coupled with perceptive food buying has enabled the school system to keep lunch prices stable for the past 3 years.

"The Tulsa warehousing system is an outstanding example of foresight and planning," says Fred Jones, State school lunch director.

2.

Last year may well go down in history as the year of the rebate. Prices have been rolled back on everything from taxes and new cars to curling irons and chain saws. But most of these refunds have been limited to single, one-time purchases. Not so for the children who attend elementary school in New Jersey's East Greenwich Township. They get a 5-cent rebate every day on the price of a school lunch.

Since April, children attending East Greenwich, Mickleton, and Mount Royal elementary schools have been paying 40 cents instead of 45 cents for a Type A lunch. Of the 500 New Jersey school systems participating in the National School Lunch Program, only one other school system has been able to reduce prices this year. In fact, most New Jersey public schools have had to raise lunch prices by 5 cents, according to Miriam Hughes, food service coordinator for the State department of education.

"Lowering the price of lunch in school this year is really an achievement," observed Ms. Hughes. "East Greenwich's food service staff, under the direction of Frances Pietrangelo, is doing an exceptional job in maintaining a fine school lunch program while managing to hold expenses down."

A relative newcomer to school

food service, Ms. Pietrangelo started as the supervisor of East Greenwich's primary school lunch system in 1972. Her job was to open a lunch program for the township's three primary schools.

"Truthfully," the school lunch manager explained, "I almost didn't get the job. I had never run a food service program in a school before, so I wasn't the board's first choice. Fortunately for me, the woman who was selected for the position decided to accept a job somewhere else . . . so the board asked me if I was still interested. I was delighted."

Ms. Pietrangelo found that a cafeteria in East Greenwich could serve all three schools. She equipped the cafeteria with the help of funds from USDA's non-food assistance program. To equip, staff and stock the new cafeteria, the school spent \$3,600.

East Greenwich School, which serves third to sixth graders, is next to Mickleton School, with all second graders, so Mickleton children simply walk over to East Greenwich's cafeteria each noon. Children in kindergarten and first grade go to Mount Royal, and have their lunches trucked hot from Ms. Pietrangelo's kitchen.

Since the day the East Greenwich lunch program opened for business, it's been entirely self-supporting. The payroll, equipment, food purchases, and even tuition for food service training courses, are all paid with proceeds from lunch sales. Even after expenses, nearly \$2,000 remained at the end of last year. The school channeled this money back into the lunch operation, which lowered lunch prices this year.

Ms. Pietrangelo has three basic rules to keep costs down: make full use of USDA-donated foods; rely on "home" cooking as much as possible; and plan purchases and menus very carefully.

"Staying on top of things is a 24 hour a day job for me," said Ms. Pietrangelo. "But I wouldn't have it any other way . . . I love it!"

Ms. Pietrangelo's food service career began as a teenager when she worked at a restaurant fountain in her South Philadelphia neighbor-

hood. She moved from her job as a sandwich-maker at the restaurant to a year-long training program in food service sponsored by a drug store chain. The training program led to a position supervising three large fountains and cafeterias owned by the chain. After a number of years, Ms. Pietrangelo left the chain and established and managed a restaurant in the southern division of Philadelphia's Albert Einstein Hospital.

"When you work in the private sector, you have to stay out of the red to remain in business. It's vital to watch every aspect of your operation closely and pinpoint areas of profit and loss," asserted Ms. Pietrangelo.

Keeping a tight inventory and understanding price trends are crucial to meeting a budget, according to the food service manager. When the cost of any product or brand becomes excessive, she substitutes a less expensive item.

"It's important to have a goal in your budget," she explained. "Smart shopping and planning is hard work, but it pays off—especially when you can pass the savings on to the kids."

Ms. Pietrangelo speaks of her customers with the same warm affection that she does of her own family. Her dedication is evident in the effort she puts into planning each month's menus. She varies the menus to make the most of seasonal bargains and USDA foods.

"I know I'm not alone in saying that I don't like to see a lot of plate waste. Children's food habits must be considered." She added, "But I believe that it's important to encourage them to try new things."

The food service manager seems to have found a balance between serving student favorites and introducing new foods. The children enjoy a wide range of entrees and less popular foods—fish, for example—get special merchandising.

"Television has a big influence on children," Ms. Pietrangelo explained, "and I try to capitalize on its positive effects. Fast food commercials make anything served on a bun look good. So we tried putting our batter-dipped fish on a bun. The kids loved it."

Ms. Pietrangelo has made a game out of trying new foods. Some trays

containing the new item have lucky numbers, and kids with lucky numbers win a hot pretzel or ice cream bar.

Thinking of ways to get kids to eat vegetables is a lot more work, even for a pro like Ms. Pietrangelo. She has discovered that one successful approach is to sneak them into desserts.

However, finding recipes for these unusual desserts sometimes presents a problem. Recently, Ms. Pietrangelo artfully persuaded a salesman to part with a secret recipe for a beet dessert, and "beetnik" cake is now a favorite of elementary schoolchildren in East Greenwich. Carrot cookies are popular, too.

The staff's vegetable soup is another dish that needs no merchandising—not that many of the staff's homemade creations do.

"We have fun making them, and we save money, too," said Ms. Pietrangelo.

Equally popular are green beans with peanut granules donated by USDA. Ms. Pietrangelo makes sure that all the commodities her schools receive are used fully. At least six entrees a month are made entirely from donated foods.

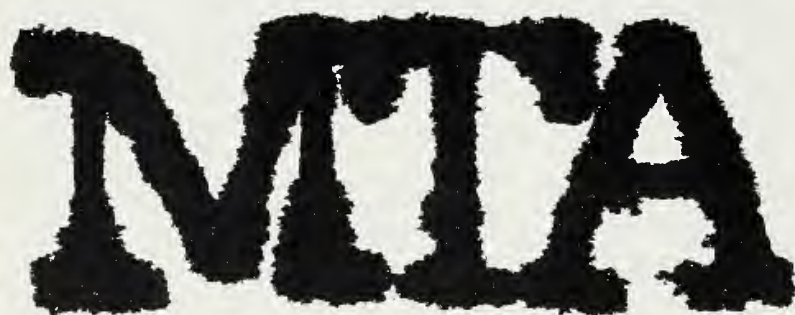
With so much planning going into the lunches, it's no surprise that program participation is high. Even though many of the children live close enough to school to walk home for lunch, over 75 percent buy lunch at school.

"We insist on making lunchtime a happy experience," said one cafeteria staff member. "We know almost all the children by their first names."

Ms. Pietrangelo puts a tremendous amount of time and energy into running the school's cafeteria but she goes to food shows and training courses, too.

Though she has much to be proud of, Ms. Pietrangelo is quick to point out that she hasn't always been successful. Once she served "hoagies" or submarine sandwiches to the first graders.

"I forgot they didn't have any front teeth," she said laughing. "We finally ended up cutting both ends off of the rolls." ☆



The emphasis is on teamwork in this nationwide effort of Management and Technical Assistance.

Big city school officials are finding answers to their food service problems these days, with the help of a new management assistance effort that features a team approach.

Called Management and Technical Assistance or MTA, the effort brings together representatives from all the groups responsible for administering school feeding programs—local school districts, State departments of education, and the Food and Nutrition Service.

The representatives form teams that visit large school systems and review every aspect of the food service operation. The teams' main task is to help identify specific problems and work with school districts to develop solutions. But another aim is to find out what makes certain programs especially successful so other schools can benefit from this knowledge.

FNS has primary responsibility for coordinating MTA; however, State and local personnel play important roles in planning and carrying out the effort.

"One of the main objectives of MTA is to improve the management and operation of child nutrition programs at all levels," explains Gene Dickey, national MTA coordinator and manager of the School Nutrition Programs Branch of the FNS Child Nutrition Division. "The team concept of MTA is consistent with our philosophy that the most effective way to do this is through the cooperative efforts of personnel from all agencies involved in administering the programs."

The focus of MTA is on schools in cities with populations of 100,000 or more, since program administrators have found that large school systems often have more problems than smaller systems. During the initial phases of the effort in fiscal year 1975, MTA teams visited 34 school districts across the country. They will visit an additional 86 school districts during fiscal year 1976, and by the end of fiscal year 1977, the teams will have visited school districts in 157 cities.

Each MTA team includes personnel with varying levels of expertise in three major areas—fiscal management, program management, and food production. Because team members have different specialties, they can develop coordinated approaches to problems.

"Many of the schools' problems overlap these areas, so it's especially helpful to have team members work together on solutions," Gene Dickey explains.

"The teams examine all three areas in their reviews," he continues, "but they do have flexibility in determining what emphasis to place on each area, depending on the particular needs of the school district."

The 2-week session in the Dallas Independent School District this fall is just one approach. The MTA team included representatives from the school district office, the FNS West-Central Regional Office, and the Texas education agency.

Some team members spent the entire time at the district office, thoroughly examining the district's computerized accounting system and other fiscal operations.

Others looked at program management, examining such things as: implementation of the free and reduced-price meal policy, menu development, purchasing procedures, staffing patterns, equipment needs, and communication between the district office and the schools. They took trips to the warehouse where commodities are stored, and to the test kitchen where food service workers sample foods and develop recipes.

"The recipes developed at the district's test kitchen are the best I've ever seen," commented one team member. "The explicit, detailed instructions guarantee a uniformly satisfactory product from school to school. I plan to use samples of these in teaching my summer food service workshops."

Much of the team's work took place in the cafeterias of the district's 19 schools, where reviewers examined food service.

They arrived at around 7 a.m. if the schools had breakfast programs, and stayed until they had explored every aspect of the school's food service operation.

While some looked at the storeroom and its organization, others checked sanitation, use of recipes, work stations and equipment.

Team members also visited with teachers and students to ask about their involvement in the lunch program. They checked the atmosphere of the cafeteria and the cashier system used on the serving line, noted the water temperature in the dishwasher, and made sure that meals met the nutritional requirements of the National School Lunch Program. The amount of plate waste, the length of time students spent in the serving line, and how well plate lunches competed with a la carte items were other areas of concern.

At the end of each day, the team reported all findings to school food service director Julia Wells. The reviewers worked closely with Ms. Wells in developing the recommendations for improvement included in the team report that followed the visit.

The report included a recommendation that the district expand its training program to offer more courses for cafeteria managers and cooks. It also described in detail what team members called an excellent inventory system. All schools use the same system to keep track of how much food they have, when it arrived, and how much it is worth. They also use uniform storage procedures, designed to assure that newest items are used last.

The Dallas review was complete when the team finished its report shortly after the visit. However, there will be a follow-up effort organized by the Texas State education agency.

"Follow-up is an important part of every MTA review," points out Gene Dickey, "because it gives the groups involved a chance to see that recommended solutions to the problems are in fact working."

There are several ways follow-up can be done. Team members can make return visits, or other specialists can visit the district to help with such areas as cost accounting, equipment, and menu planning.

MTA organizers have found that the visits and follow-up efforts are helpful to team members and program administrators as well as local school districts. Team members get a chance to learn from each other, and they often return to their jobs with a better understanding of the overall operation of the child nutrition programs.

"Many program regulations were drafted years ago when schools were still single unit entities," Mr. Dickey explains. "The visits should give us the opportunity to assist major cities with their management problems and to identify issues which may result in clarification of



An MTA team member from the Dallas Independent School District observes lunch preparation in an elementary school.

MTA



An MTA team member from FNS talks with students while examining the amount of plate waste at a Dallas elementary school.

national policies and regulations."

"The reviews," adds Mr. Dickey, "also enable Federal and State staffs to determine areas in which there is need for further training.

"We already know that there is need for additional training at all levels of administration," he says. "For example, staff development would be useful in such areas as computerized accounting systems, menu planning, and equipment—among other things."

How do district officials who have participated in MTA reviews feel about the effort?

Dr. Nolan Estes, superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District, says he's firmly in favor of it.

"We're delighted to interact with State and federal people to improve our food service program," he explains. "After all, this area is a vital link in our overall education system."

Here are some highlights from MTA visits in other parts of the country:

Hammond, Indiana

During a visit in the spring of 1975, the MTA team placed special emphasis on an analysis of the fiscal status of Hammond's lunch program. Concerned over an anticipated cash deficit in the school food service account, district officials had asked the team to give extra consideration to this area.

After 2 years of financial losses, the officials were thinking of closing down their school food service operation.

The school board operates 32 schools in Hammond. Most of the schools have on-site kitchens, but there is also a limited satellite feeding operation in the district. In December 1974, the average number of meals served daily was roughly 8,750, with student participation ranging from 16 to over 96 percent of total enrollment.

In reviewing fiscal operations, the team's activities centered on: an examination of routine reporting and accounting procedures, and an in-depth analysis of the financial condition of the food service account.

In the first area, while team members did recommend preparation of a monthly operating statement for each for each school, they found that the program was being operated under accepted recordkeeping procedures.

More significant findings were in the second area.

The in-depth analysis by the MTA team demonstrated that, despite its past financial losses, the existing food service system was currently breaking even. An advance of funds from the school board had solved a temporary cash flow problem, and current income was sufficient to repay that advance.

The team's analysis provided opportunity to put this problem of cash balance into proper perspective against the broader background of total operations of the school food service system. From this broader perspective, school officials could clearly see that they had a viable food service program going, and they discarded the plans they had been making to discontinue it.

Fulton County, Georgia

The MTA team in Fulton County found an excellent training program for food service employees. Before school opens and after it closes each year, all employees attend 3-day workshops. In addition, all employees attend professional meetings and are encouraged to take a baking course offered by a local vocational school and other courses offered by the state division of school food service. New employees receive on-the-job training, with managers being trained by the two county food service coordinators, and staffers being trained by managers and coordinators.

The team also commended the Fulton County school food service staff for its high-quality food, pointing out that multiple-choice menus are offered in all high schools, and that all schools bake their own breads and desserts.

But even a well-run program such as this can benefit from the recommendations resulting from an MTA visit. For example, team members found that district schools often used various methods to arrive at meal or milk counts. To help provide useful administrative information and facilitate audits, the MTA team recommended that Fulton County develop a standardized system of forms and procedures to use in all schools and showed them some examples.

Sacramento, California

MTA team members who were visiting the Sacramento Unified School District discovered a common management problem.

The school district had developed sophisticated but practical data processing systems for collecting and organizing information about school food service operations. Such basic information as cost and income data and inventory control of purchased and donated foods was readily available from computers.

Yet, like many other districts that have computers available, Sacramento had made limited or no use of this valuable management tool. According to Larry Wharton, a supervisory food program specialist in FNS' Western Regional Office, "School districts that have not taken advantage of computers usually have a number of reasons.

Frequently they don't feel that they have the expertise, or are considered low priority users of the computers. Often, however, it is simply a matter of not realizing the value to their operation and how to go about getting plugged into the computer."

Together with State agencies, the FNS Western Regional Office is working on ways to help schools benefit from computer systems. They are currently developing a model which will provide districts with a guide for greater and more efficient use of computers to fit their individual needs. According to Mr. Wharton, the model will not dictate what they should do, but suggest things that can be done, using such districts as Sacramento as examples. The model, which will fit most any district's management structure, will provide a flow chart of steps necessary to achieve the desired degree of computerization.

Trenton, New Jersey

Throughout the country, many school lunch managers are faced with the problem of establishing a ticket system, or other system of payment, that does not overtly distinguish paying students from those who receive free or reduced price lunches. In early October, an MTA team visited 14 schools in Trenton and worked with lunch managers and administrative staff to devise some new methods to help combat this problem.

The team recommended that elementary schools try switching to a system where all students are given envelopes to return to their teacher with the appropriate payment inside. An alternative system would be for students to report to the collection location individually, rather than as a group. In the junior high and high schools, the MTA team suggested that tickets be sold for full price lunches as well as free and reduced-price lunches.

The team explained that an all-ticket system would make accounting for lunches easier and more accurate. In many schools, plate counts and attendance records were being used to estimate the number of meals served. Under the new procedure, lunch managers would be able to rely on a ticket system for an accurate breakdown of how many free, reduced, and full price lunches were actually served each day. The tickets would be identical except for inconspicuous code numbers that would tell the lunch manager whether to record the lunches sold as free, reduced, or full price.

The MTA team also suggested an alternative to selling tickets. If a school preferred, it could set up a master roster with the names of all students on it. Children would pay for their meals in advance and be checked off as they passed through the lunch line. The cashier would be the only person to know whether a child was getting a free, reduced, or full price meal, and could use the completed roster as an accounting tool. ☆

By Melanie Watts



As far as Ms. Green is concerned, though, it's time well spent. Because in her book, variety is the spice of lunch. ☆

SENIOR FAIRS

Delaware's outreach effort brings elderly and health and social service agencies together for three 1-day festivals.

Reaching senior citizens with the services they need to stay healthy and self-sufficient has been a difficult challenge for government agencies and social service groups. There are well over 20 million elderly persons living in the United States today, making up 10 percent of the Nation's population. However, senior citizens constitute more than 16 percent of the country's poor persons, according to a recent survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

FNS has been closely involved in efforts to reach the elderly poor with food assistance, but successful attempts to reach them have depended largely on the footwork of local outreach people who make home visits.

With nearly two out of three needy old persons living alone, the outreach worker's job—telling the elderly about services—has been a demanding one. This past year, outreach for oldsters took on a new dimension in the State of Delaware.

The University of Delaware's College of Home Economics and Cooperative Extension Service initiated an "Aging Project" designed to provide training, evaluation, and technical support to the State's Title III and Title VII programs for the elderly. The Delaware Department of Health and Social Service's division of aging approved and funded the project, which was headed by Clare Davies.

Under the amended Older Americans Act of 1965, Title III provides funds for the operation of senior centers, while Title VII provides for low-cost meals and nutrition information at the centers or at special nutrition sites throughout the year.

"We were trying, through the additional expertise and assistance of the staff under contract at the university, to streamline these programs and see that the poorest of our senior citizens are the first to benefit from the services offered," said Chris Frysztacki, nutritionist for the division of aging.

Even with a well organized program of services for the elderly, two problems still remained for the project: discovering how much the elderly knew about the services available, and finding ways to get necessary information to needy seniors.

To meet this need, two members of the Aging Project staff, Ray Tyler and Delores Colburn, carried out plans for a senior festival—a day-long fair which would bring together volunteer organizations, State and private social service agencies, and senior citizens in one central location.

Mr. Tyler and Ms. Colburn found that they could take advantage of the State's compact size and coordinate, from the State level, the efforts of all State and local groups concerned with providing services for the aged.

"It would be a service that could be provided at locations and times responsive to elderly needs and situations," pointed out Mr. Tyler.

Three day-long festivals were scheduled for the early summer in targeted locations throughout the State—and all service agencies and organizations concerned with the health problems of the elderly were invited to set up exhibits and health screening booths.

The project's staff made up a guest list of elderly participants involved in programs at the nutrition sites in each area and launched an extensive information campaign which included: public service radio announcements; newspaper notices; advertisements in buses; and posters for bulletin boards in senior centers, apartment buildings, and stores.

The festival's chairpersons also arranged transportation. At the festival held in Wilmington, a long row of yellow school buses lined up outside the university's Wilcastle Center promptly at 10 a.m., delivering several hundred low-income seniors to the converted mansion. Inside, booth after booth of informative displays, brochures, and health screening equipment filled the ballroom. The exhibits extended into several other rooms, with one room set aside as a theater to show films of special interest to the elderly. Crowds of seniors gathered around the booths—having their blood pressure taken and hearing tested. They collected brochures, and chatted with exhibitors.

At the FNS exhibit, visiting officer-in-charge Ed McNichols answered questions about the food stamp program and was swamped by visitors requesting the FNS publications "Cooking for Two," and "Food Guide for Older Folks." In addition to meeting a large number of older Delawareans, Mr. McNichols also met many new people from other agencies who are also involved with elderly feeding and nutrition.

Ms. Colburn and Mr. Tyler consider this contact and information exchange between exhibitors an important secondary function of the senior festivals.

"We hope that the festivals helped get people working together, cooperating with each other, and unifying

their efforts," said Ms. Colburn.

For the elderly, too, the festivals provided a welcome opportunity to socialize and make new friends. The department of aging served festival visitors a free lunch and provided entertainment.

While a senior citizen string band struck up some old favorites, other seniors in the audience took to the floor and displayed their dancing skills. Skits and interpretive readings followed—playing to a full house.

Throughout the day, volunteers recruited by the Aging Project staff circulated about with questionnaires, interviewing as many of the older visitors as possible. The questionnaires were specifically designed to determine how much festival visitors knew about the services available to them.

Questions dealt with food stamps and, more particularly, with lunch programs for the elderly at nearby locations. Staff members asked festival visitors who were participating in a lunch program, either at a senior center or at a nutrition site, how they felt about the meals served at the centers, and how they rated their own nutritional status and eating habits. Through these informal interviews, Aging Project staffers hoped to encourage elderly visitors with limited incomes to take advantage of one of the State's meal programs for the elderly.

Since 1974 when food stamps became available in Delaware, FNS field representatives have been authorizing nutrition sites to accept food stamps as payment for the meals they serve. Delaware's 24 sites are also eligible to receive USDA-donated foods. In the past year, donated cheese and canned beef have been used in senior centers such as those operated by Wilmington's Project SERVE.

"The USDA-donated foods are incorporated into meals specifically planned to conform with the dietary restrictions common to the seniors, and the foods defray the cost of each lunch 11 cents," explains SERVE director Daphne Aaron.

The elderly who eat lunch at senior centers generally pay for their meals by making small contributions to a collection box, according to Ms. Aaron. They're able to use either

money or food stamps as payment.

"Delaware switched over to food stamps from food distribution in 1974, and we are working hard to get all of our senior centers authorized to accept stamps as quickly as possible," explains Chris Frysztacki of the division of aging office in Wilmington. She adds that the change-over should greatly benefit Delaware's older people.

The food stamp program has generated considerable interest among the senior citizens, reports Ms. Frysztacki, because it is consistent with their lifestyles. Food stamps allow seniors to buy food in amounts they can conveniently use. Over half of all senior citizens either live by themselves or with one other person.

Many elderly cooks find pre-packaged TV dinner-type meals not only more convenient than meals they make themselves, but many times a necessity if their eyesight is poor or other health problems interfere with their ability to fix many dishes.

Nutrition education at the senior centers is concerned with total nutritional requirements. Staff members realize that for many seniors, lunch is the only good meal of the day and encourage the elderly participants to apply at the local welfare office if they might be eligible for additional help through the food stamp program.

"The site manager talks up the advantages of the food stamp program and tells the seniors what they must bring to their first interview," Ms. Frysztacki says. The manager even arranges transportation for them if they need assistance.

But the centers offer more than nutrition, social and referral services—they include employment counseling. The Wilmington site is the central office for the statewide service. Staff members interview prospective employers and encourage them to provide jobs. The employment opportunities are then listed at the centers.

"We feel that activities like those provided at the senior centers and at the senior festivals help elderly Delawareans remain, or become, integrated with the rest of the community," Ms. Frysztacki adds, "not isolated from it." ☆

This is the second of two articles on the food stamp quality control system. The first article appeared in the June 1975 issue of FOOD AND NUTRITION.

Anyone who completes an application for food stamps could be the subject of a quality control review, even if he is not currently participating in the food stamp program or never received program benefits.

That's because food stamp quality control reviewers check cases involving "negative actions" as well as "active" cases. In active case reviews, the reviewer checks whether food stamp participants are eligible for the program in the month they are participating, and if they are paying the correct amount and receiving the right food stamp allotment.

For negative action cases, the reviewer examines the State agency's decision to deny a food stamp application or terminate a household's participation before the end of its certification period. For every household denied benefits or withdrawn from food stamp participation from July through December 1974, about 19 households were authorized to receive food stamps.

Why might a State agency deny a food stamp application?

Denial usually occurs when a household does not meet one of the food stamp eligibility criteria, explains Priscilla Shaw, Chief of the Quality Control Evaluation Branch of FNS' Food Stamp Division.

QUALITY CONTROL

"For example," says Ms. Shaw, "an application is refused if the household's income or resources exceed maximum limits set by USDA, or if an applicant doesn't register for work, or doesn't supply adequate verification of income and resources."

Similarly, the food stamp office terminates a recipient's food stamps when an increase in income or resources makes the household ineligible to participate in the program.

State quality control workers regularly review a certain percentage of these negative actions, although the total number of reviews varies from State to State. Every month each State draws a sample of all negative actions, and individual cases are randomly selected from this sample for review. FNS requires each State to review from 75 to 800 cases every 6 months, depending on the State's total number of negative actions.

The reviewer begins by examining the case file at the certification office where the household applied.

"The case is reviewed for correctness at the time the decision was made," Priscilla Shaw explains. "The reviewer checks only the reason given for the action, even if there is evidence in the case file that the household is ineligible for other reasons."

If evidence in the case file is not enough to prove that the decision under review is correct or incorrect, the reviewer goes a step further. He, or she, phones or visits a "collateral contact," such as a banker, doctor, utility company, employer or landlord. If information is still missing, the reviewer makes a home visit.

Some home visits may present unique problems for the reviewer. "For instance," says Ms. Shaw, "a person may feel that he has been

treated unfairly by the local food stamp office. In such cases, the reviewer must be sure that the person understands that the reviewer does not have the authority to reverse the local agency's decision."

The reviewer then reports his findings to his quality control supervisor; together they evaluate the information and rule the action valid or invalid. Of the 19,449 negative actions reviewed during July through December 1974, 7.3 percent were invalid—denied or terminated incorrectly.

What are some of the common errors made on food stamp denials and terminations?

Ms. Shaw explains, "The State agency might make a computation error, or deny a household on the basis of excessive income when actually the net income is low enough to qualify them for food stamps." For instance, the case record might contain evidence that a household had \$80 in medical expenses which the caseworker did not deduct from gross income; therefore, the reason given for the denial, "excessive income," would not be correct.

Or another case record might indicate "excessive resources" as the reason for denial. But if the record also shows that there was an elderly person in the household, the resource limit would have been twice as high and the household might have been eligible.

An example of an incorrect termination would be one where the household was given no notice of termination from the program.

After the quality control reviewer and his supervisor evaluate the reasons for denial or termination in each case, the State agency forwards the findings to the local certification of-

fice, which corrects any errors.

In addition to this corrective action at the local level, the quality control system involves corrective measures at the State level. FNS requires States to take corrective action when their error rates for both active and negative actions exceed certain levels which FNS considers reasonable. For negative actions, the acceptable error rate is 3 percent. And when a State's incorrect negative actions exceed this rate, the State must submit a corrective action plan to FNS and implement it. If any part of the plan is ineffective or weak, the State must revise it.

A corrective action plan might include increased supervisory review of individual cases, additional documentation and collateral contacts, or additional staff training. Long-range action might include changing instructions to clarify provisions that are being misinterpreted and reducing workloads where errors are the result of excessive work assignments.

State agencies must submit a semi-annual report to FNS on the validity of their caseloads, identifying problems and stating what action has been taken or planned to correct these problems. These reports provide State agencies with the information they need to detect weaknesses in their operations. At the same time, they make it possible for FNS to carry out its responsibility to report to Congress and the public on the nationwide status of food stamp eligibility and issuance.

By working cooperatively, FNS and State agencies are getting the kind of information they need to administer the food stamp program, and to make sure the program serves those who need food assistance. ☆

Official Business.

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

POSTAGE
& FEES PAID
U.S. DEPT.
OF
AGRICULTURE
AGR 101



THIRD CLASS BLK. RT.
Permit Number .005-5

EARL L. BUTZ
Secretary of Agriculture

RICHARD L. FELTNER
Assistant Secretary of Agriculture

EDWARD J. HEKMAN
Administrator
Food and Nutrition Service

JANICE A. KERN, Editor
MARCIA B. EDDINS, Art Director

FOOD AND NUTRITION is published bimonthly by the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. The use of funds for printing this publication has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through November 30, 1976. Yearly subscription is \$2.50 domestic, \$3.15 foreign. Single copies 45 cents each. Subscription orders should be sent to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 20402.

Reference to commercial products and services does not imply endorsement or discrimination by the Department of Agriculture.

The Secretary of Agriculture has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of this Department.

Prints of photos may be obtained from Photo Library, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

All programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are available to everyone without regard to race, creed, color, sex or national origin.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

contents

- 2** New Child Nutrition Legislation
- 6** Two Lunch Programs Save Money
- 8** MTA—The Emphasis is on Teamwork
- 12** Bagels for the Bicentennial
- 13** Senior Fairs
- 14** Quality Control